

THE
Moral and Religious Cabinet.

"To aid the cause of Virtue and Religion."

Vol. I.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1808.

No. 6.

For the MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CABINET.

LETTER

From a Gentleman in Litchfield (Connecticut) to his friend in this city.

Litchfield, 19th November, 1807.

My dear Sir,

SUCH a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, as we enjoy, at present in this place, few men of the age have witnessed.

I have not time to give you a particular account of this wonderful work; but for the present will attempt to give you a relation of what has come to my knowledge for three weeks past.

Sunday 1st instant was a day which will be remembered with gratitude by all holy beings through the ceaseless ages of eternity, as a day in which a Holy God was graciously pleased to manifest himself a present God, as his word appeared to be clothed with power, carrying conviction, as we have reason to believe, from what has since taken place, to great numbers of souls who were dead in sin. The day was rendered peculiarly solemn by the admission of twenty-six persons to this church, and a very impressive discourse was delivered by the Rev. D. Huntington, from Isaiah lx. 8. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows."

This day ten persons of my acquaintance were deeply impressed with the sense of their perishing need of a Saviour; a number of whom have since become reconciled to the Mediator. The Sabbath following the Rev. Mr. Ward, of Danbury, preached with us from 11th of Hosea, 8th verse: "How shall I give thee

VOL. 1.

up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." So so solemn an auditory I may venture to say, I never saw. The speaker appeared as one immediately inspired; and the word seemed to be quick and powerful—tears were seen in almost every eye. When singing Old Hundred in the 70th Hymn, Dwight's collection, of a sudden the Holy Spirit appeared to be sent down like a *rushing mighty wind*, by his quickening and awaking influence.

A daughter of E—— R—— was suddenly so overcome with a sense of her guilt, as to fall into her seat. Mr. R—— himself, until this time, had appeared in a state of total security; but now the law was brought home to his soul, and he fell into his seat. By this time about one third of the singers were in a flood of tears, and down in their seats, and sobbing to that degree as to be heard across the house: indeed weeping was to be heard from every part of the house. This class includes a great part of those young ladies who rank with the gay and fashionable world. Mr. Huntington has taken great pains with the above persons, and it appears that all who were thus affected, have a genuine work of conviction upon them, a number of whom have obtained a lively hope in the Redeemer. It is observed by all who have been conversant with the subjects of this glorious work, that their conviction is very pungent, and God is pleased to appear in mercy and cut short his work. Of late the subjects of this work are usually under conviction not more than eight or ten days.

Since the 1st instant about fifty instances of conviction have taken place among my acquaintance. One thing is worthy of remark, viz. that the blacks are peculiarly wrought upon, and eight in this neighbourhood gave good evidence of their having a well grounded hope.—The Church meet once a week for special prayer—and conferences are held almost every night in the week, and people flock to meeting as though they were famishing

for the word. Mr. H. and Judge R——, are of opinion that a hundred and more souls may with propriety be added to this church in a few weeks.

During the progress of this work, *thus far*, nothing of enthusiasm has been observable. But order and decency have marked its rise and progress; and it has been attended with much outward peace, and harmony of sentiment, among our order.

There are persons among us of different *sentiments* from the *spirit of the Gospel*, who seem to think these *bablers* are about to *turn the world upside down*. This we have been taught to expect.

For the MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CABINET.

AN EVENING'S THOUGHT ON THE SHORTNESS OF TIME.

NOW, my soul, the day is ended! The hours are all fled—they are fled to the Supreme Judge, and have given in their evidence—an evidence registered in Heaven, and to be produced at the great day. Happy they whose improvements have kept pace with the fleeting moments; who have seized them as they advanced, and engaged them in the pursuit of Wisdom, or the service of Virtue. How is the day gone almost as soon as it dawned! The silent moments slip away insensibly! No thief steals more unperceived from the pillaged house! Where ever we are, however employed, time pursues his incessant course. Though we are listless and dilatory, the great measurer of our days presses on in his unwearied career, and whirls our weeks, our months, and years away. Is it not then surprisingly strange to hear people complain of the tediousness of their time, and how heavy it hangs upon their hands: to see them contriving a variety of amusing artifices to accelerate its flight, and get rid of its burden? Ah! thoughtless mortals! why need you urge the

headlong torrent? Your days are swifter than a post, which, carrying dispatches of the greatest importance, with unremitting speed, scours the road. They pass away like the swift sailing ship, which skims along the watery plain—yea, with the rapidity of an eagle, which leaves the stormy blast behind her, while she cleaves the air, and darts upon her prey. (Job ix. 25, 26.) And now it is gone! How short it appears! When the fond eye beheld it in perspective, it seemed a very considerable space; minutes crowded upon minutes, and hours ranged behind hours, exhibited an extensive plain, and flattered me with a long progression of pleasure. But upon a retrospect, how wonderfully has the scene altered? How clearly do I now discover the cheat—may it never impose itself upon my imagination again. I find there is nothing abiding on this side eternity—a long duration in a finite state is mere delusion. Perhaps the healthy and gay may not readily credit this serious truth, especially from a young pen, new to its employment. Let us then refer ourselves to the decision of the ancients: Ask some venerable old person that is just marching off the mortal stage, How many have been the days of the years of thy life? (it was a monarch's question, and therefore can want no recommendation to the fashionable world) Observe how he shakes his hoary locks, and from a deep conviction replies: “Four score years have finished their rounds—to sorrow these cheeks have been witness. Such a term of years may seem long to inconsiderate youth; but, oh! how short! how scanty to one who has had the experience! short as a gleam of transient sunshine, yea, short as the shadow that departeth. Methinks it was but yesterday that I exchanged my childish sports for more manly exercise, and now I am resigning them both for the sleep of death. As soon as we are born, we begin to draw towards our end, and how short is the interval between our cradle and our tomb.” O may we believe this testimony of mature age: and may every evening bring it with clearer evidence to our minds.

D. C.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER
TO A MOTHER ON THE DEATH OF A BELOVED CHILD.

There are seasons of distress, when human aid and human comforters are vain: for what can compensate the loss of those who are dear to us as our own existence? and what arguments have force enough to reconcile us to the severe dispensation? Grief is deaf to the voice of reason. Nature and philosophy have no adequate remedies for a wounded spirit. And I am the last person in the world, who has any right to inculcate resignation to the divine Will, having myself made so little proficiency therein; yet my dear friend will allow me to remind her, *that* is the only true consolation in seasons of distress like your's: distress which I cannot but commiserate. It is melancholy, indeed, to look around and not meet the wonted objects of our love: But you will remember that if earth has lost a sweet opening flower, heaven has gained an angel: And you will allow me to ask, what is there in the world for which you could have wished your child to live? What is the fairest portion under the sun, compared to that which she is happily possessed of? Had she lived,—lived long,—still she must *have died*; and now the agony is past. Now “the pain of life is o'er.” And she might have lived, till no kind, attentive, affectionate mother had been near to close her eyes, and watch her dying bed. You would have wished her to live for *your sake*: that indeed might have been desirable. But Jesus Christ thus addressed his sorrowing disciples: “If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I.” Let this motive have its due influence on your mournful heart, and it will chase away your grief. What could you desire more? Did you wish your child's happiness? You have your wish. *She is happy*; emphatically happy. Did you wish for her riches and honour? She is crowned with highest honour, and all the riches of her Father's house: unalienable riches. Did you wish for her the best society? the converse and friendship of the wise and good? With such only

she now associates. Angels are her companions, and God himself her Friend.

Allow me to recommend to your imitation the example of a King, who while his child lay sick, fasted and wept: but afterwards, on the death of the child, washed and eat; with this encouraging reflection, "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." When this thought suggests itself, give it entrance, and you will find it consolatory, always remembering to bless the Lord, "who gave, and who taketh away."

SALVATION FOR PENITENT SINNERS.

Extracted from Dr. PALEY'S Sermons.

IT has been thought an extravagant doctrine, that the greatest sinners were sometimes nearer the Kingdom of heaven, than they whose offences were less exorbitant and less conspicuous; yet, I apprehended, the doctrine only wants to be rationally explained to shew that it has both a great deal of truth and a great deal of use in it; that it may be an awakening religious proposition to some, whilst it cannot, without being wilfully misconstrued, delude or deceive any.

Of all conditions in the world, the most to be despained of is the condition of those who are altogether insensible and unconcerned about religion, and yet they may be, in the mean time, tolerably regular in their outward behaviour; their character may be fair, they may pass with the common stream, or they may even be well spoken of; nevertheless, I say, that whilst this insensibility remains upon their minds, their condition is more to be despained of than that of any other persons. The religion of Christ does not, in any way, apply to them; they do not belong to it.

For finding things go on very smoothly, finding themselves received and respected, without any religious principle, they are

kept asleep, as to their spiritual concerns, by the very quietness and prosperity of things around them.

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." It is possible to slumber in a fancied security, or rather in an unconsciousness of danger, a blindness to our situation, a thoughtlessness or stupefaction concerning it, even at the time, when we are in the utmost peril of missing salvation, when we are descending fast to perdition.

Now, it is not only within the compass of probability, but it frequently, nay, I hope, very frequently comes to pass, that open, confessed, acknowledged sins, sting the sinner's conscience; that the upbraiding of mankind, the cry, the clamour, the indignation, which his wickedness has excited, may, at length, come home to his own soul; may compel him to reflect, may bring him, tho' by force and violence, to a sense of his guilt and knowledge of his situation. Now, I say, that this sense of sin, by whatever cause it is produced, is better than religious insensibility.

The thing wanted, as the quickening principle, as the seed and germ of religion in the heart, is *compunction conviction of sin, of danger, of the necessity of fleeing to the Redeemer*, and to his religion in good earnest. "They were pricked in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This was the state of mind of those who first heard the gospel, and this is the state of mind still to be brought about before the gospel be heard with effect.

SCRAP.

DID we believe a final reckoning and judgment, or did we think enough of what we do believe, we should allow more love in religion than we do: since religion itself is love to God and man.

DUTY OF RELIEVING RELATIVES.

"If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. V. 8.

Though this text may be easily understood from the context, as well as by many excellent comments written upon the Scriptures; yet it is misunderstood and misapplied by hundreds of thousands of persons even to the present day. They seem to understand it as only implying the duty of providing for one's own family, in temporal concerns. That it is the duty of every person, who has a family, to use all diligence in procuring for it the necessities and conveniences of life, is clear from the general tenor of Scripture, as well as from reason and common sense. But, a little attention to the passage before us, in connection with the context, will convince us that it inculcates a duty of another kind. Among various directions, which the Apostle Paul gives to Timothy, respecting his ministerial office, is this, that he should be cautious in admitting any widows, or indigent persons upon the poor list, of the Church of Christ at Ephesus, except those who, upon investigation, were found to be *really* such; widows in distressing circumstances, and destitute of the necessities of life. If any one, having parents, or near relatives in such circumstances, and would not provide for them, when it was in his power so to do, but would throw them as a burden upon the Church; such person, whatever his profession of religion might be, was to be accounted no better than an infidel. But, if these indigent persons lived under his roof, and he neglected to provide for them; this would aggravate his crime still more. The heathens were sensible of the reasonableness of taking care of near relations, especially of parents, when in poverty: for, an old Roman Law enjoined, "Let children relieve their parents, or be put in prison." The word *piety*, in the fourth verse here, may be understood in the same sense as *pietas* in Latin, including in it that *natural affection* and *grateful reverence* which children owe to their parents. It is rendered *kindness* in the margin of our Bibles.

Our Lord condemned those who neglected to provide for their parents, under a pretext that they had made an offering, or gift, of that which might have supported them, (Corban) to the service of the temple. This was, in effect, annulling the fifth commandment, wherein the duty of *honouring* parents is inculcated with a peculiar promise. The word to *honour*, signifies not only to pay them due reverence and respect; but to support and assist them.

The two last verses of the chapter before us, are likewise frequently misunderstood, or, at least, not sufficiently attended to, even at this time. The Apostle exhorts Timothy, in a most pathetic and solemn manner, to use great precaution in admitting persons into any office in the ministry: for, if they should be found ignorant, or immoral in their conduct, he would be involved in their guilt, and likewise be instrumental, through them, in doing a material injury to the Christian Church. Previous to their admission, an enquiry or investigation should be made, respecting their qualifications and moral character. In some these are manifest or plain, even before investigation, or the decision of the ministers who examine them; so that they may be immediately judged unworthy of any spiritual office. In others, the matter is more dubious for a time, as they may use artifice or guile in concealing their faults or their incapacity: therefore, there is the more need of a close and strict examination. But their conduct, whether good or bad, will ere long be made to appear to public view. Timothy was to act, without *prejudging* on the one hand; or *partiality leaning too much to one side*, or the other.

REFLECTION.

LOVE is indeed heaven upon earth; since heaven above would not be heaven without it; for where there is not love, there is fear; but, "Perfect love casts out fear." And yet we naturally fear most to offend what we most love.

PENN.

BEAUTY AND EXCELLENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

Extracted from a late publication entitled, "A Plea for Religion and the Sacred Writings: addressed to the disciples of Thomas Paine, and to wavering Christians of every denomination. By the Rev. David Simpson, M. A.

THIS book (the Bible) which you are unhappy enough to despise, abounds with all the various beauties of the Greek and Roman classics, and in a much higher degree of perfection. It consists, not merely of a collection of chapters and verses, and distinct aphorisms on trivial subjects, as too many are apt to conceive; but is one grand Epic composition, forming sixty-six books, of unequal lengths, and various importance. As the sun, moon, planets and comets, make one system, and are each of them necessary to the harmony of the whole; so the different books of the sacred code, though separately considered, and taken out of their connection, may appear unimportant; yet as parts of one large and complicated system, they are all necessary, useful, or convenient to the perfection of the whole. And though the time is longer than is usually admitted in compositions of the Epic kind, its beginning being with the birth, and its end with the close of nature itself; yet even this circumstance is perfectly consistent with the rest of the adorable plan; a thousand years being with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years. The action of it too is one, entire, and the greatest that can be conceived. All the beings in the universe, of which we have any knowledge, are concerned in the drama—The design of it is to display the perfections of the adorable Creator; to rescue the human race from total misery and ruin; and to form us, by example, to glory, honour, and immortality. The Epic opens in a mild and calm sublimity, with the creation of the world itself. It is carried on with an astonishing variety of incidents, and unparalleled simplicity and majesty of language. The least and most trivial episodes, or under-actions, which are interwoven in it, are parts either necessary, or convenient, to forward the main design: either so necessary, that without them the work must be imper-

fect, or so convenient that no others can be imagined more suitable to the place in which they are. And it closes with a book, or, to keep up the figure, with a scene, the most solemn, majestic, and sublime, that ever was composed by any author, sacred or profane.

“ The human mind can conceive nothing more elevated, more grand, more glowing, more beautiful, and more elegant, than what we meet with in the sacred writings of the Hebrew bards. The almost ineffable sublimity of the subjects they treat upon is fully equalled by the energy of the language, and the dignity of the style. Some of these writings too, exceed in antiquity the fabulous ages of Greece, as much as in sublimity they are superior to the most finished productions of that celebrated people.” Moses stands unrivalled by the best of them both as a poet, orator, and historian: David as a poet and musician: Solomon as a moralist, naturalist, and pastoral writer: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Nahum, Joel, and some other of the Prophets, as orators, or poets, or both: Homer and Virgil must yield to the palm of Job for true sublimity: Isaiah excels all the world in almost every kind of composition: the four Evangelists are eminent as orators and historians: Peter and James, Luke and John, are authors of no ordinary rank: and Paul is the most sublime of writers and eloquent of orators. All these eulogiums upon the sacred penmen are spoken of them merely as authors, without the smallest view to their higher order as inspired writers, and messengers of the Lord of Hosts. If this last consideration be taken into the account, and added to the former, what an all-important book must the Bible be? what a blessing to mankind? Language cannot express the value of it. If the exhortation of a late author, as improperly applied to the Grecian bard, were applied to this inestimable volume, it would be used with the strictest propriety and decorum!

“ Read God’s word, once, and you can read no more;
For all books else appear so mean, so poor,

Verse will seem prose : but still persist to read,
And God's word will be all the books you need."

The Bible abounds with a vast variety of matter, a confused magnificence above all order ; and is the fittest book in the world to be the standard of doctrines, and the model of good writing. We defy all the sons of infidelity to shew us any thing like it, or second to it. Where will you meet with such a number of instructive proverbs— fervent prayers—sublime songs—beneficent miracles—apposite parables— infallible prophecies—affectionate epistles—eloquent orations— instructive historians—pure laws —rich promises—awful denunciations—useful examples, as are set before us in this richly fraught magazine of all true excellence in matter and composition, the Holy Bible ?

And we recommend to the gentleman, the scholar, and the philosopher, as well as to the illiterate christian, the daily perusal of the bible.

THE CHOICE AND CRITERION OF RELIGION.

WOULD you wish, amidst the vast variety of religious systems in vogue, to make a distinction, and prefer the best ? Recollect the character of Christ : keep a steady eye on that universal and permanent good-will to men, in which he lived, by which he suffered, for which he died. What now would you expect from a mind so purely and habitually benign ? Is it possible to suppose that a heart thus warm and wide could harbour a narrow wish, or utter a partial sentiment ? Most luckily, in this point, the fullest satisfaction is in every man's power. Go search the religion he has left, to the bottom: not in those artificial theories, however, which have done it the most essential and lasting injury ; not in their manner, who assume his name, but overlook his example, and who are talking for ever about the merits of his death, at the expence of those virtues which adorned his life ; not in those wild

and romantic opinions, which, to make us christians, would make us fools : but in those writings, and in those alone, which contain his genuine history and gospel ; and which, in the most peculiar and exclusive sense, are the words of eternal life. Commentators are good for nothing but perplexing the head, and repressing the ardour of the heart. Do ye want sentiment ? so do they ; do ye want devotion ? so do they ; do ye want information ? so do they. For my own part, I never saw one in my life, which was not a thousand times more unintelligible than the text. Do read the scriptures then as you would the LAST WILL of some deceased friend, in which you expected a large bequest ; and tell me, in the sincerity of your soul, what you see there to circumscribe the social affections, to quash the risings of benevolence, to check the generous effusions of humanity ? Littleness of mind, and narrowness of temper were certainly no parts of our Saviour's character ; and he enjoins nothing which he did not himself uniformly and minutely exemplify. Strange ! that an institution, which begins and ends in benignity, should be prostituted to countenance the workings of malevolent passions, should produce animosities among those minds it was intended to unite ! But there is not a corruption in the human heart which has not sometimes borrowed the garb of religion. Christianity, however, is not the less precious to the honest, that knaves and hypocrites have so long abused her ; and let bigots and sceptics say what they will, she softens and enlarges the heart, warms and impregnates the mind of man, as certainly and as sensibly too, as the sun does the earth. This CRITERION is as obvious as it is decisive. True generosity is always open, always acceptable, and always known. Whoever would be thought pious, without this genuine signature of piety ; be his behaviour as starch and his face as sad and sanctimonious as you will, mark him down for a hypocrite. But he whose bosom heaves with kindness, who would not say or do any thing to hurt another for the world, whose ruling disposition is to be obliging and beneficent, (whatever system he has adopted,) lives

under the visible influence of true goodness. Esteem him as a brother and kinsman: the same spirit which lives in you lives in him: the divine image is stamped on him, as well as on you; and he copies that example which leads us all to immortality.

ON THE BEING OF A GOD.

SEE, here, I hold a Bible in my hand, and you see the cover, the leaves, the letters, the words; but you do not see the writers or the printer, the letter-founder, the ink-maker, the paper-maker, or the binder. You never did see them, you never will see them, and yet there is not one of you who will think of disputing or denying the being of these men. I go farther: I affirm that you see the very souls of these men, in seeing this book, and you feel yourselves obliged to allow that they had skill, contrivance, design, memory, fancy, reason, and so on. In the same manner, if you see a picture, you judge there was a painter; if you see a house, you judge there was a builder of it; and if you see one room contrived for this purpose, and another for that, a door to enter, a window to admit light, a chimney to hold fire, you conclude the builder was a person of skill and forecast, who formed the house with a view to the accommodation of its inhabitants. In this manner examine the world, and pity the man who, when he sees the sign of the wheat-sheaf, hath sense enough to know that there is a joiner, and somewhere a painter; but who, when he sees the wheat-sheaf itself, is so stupid as not to say to himself, this had a wise and good Creator.

REMARK—South observes, that “ he who would not read the scriptures for fear of spoiling his stile, shewed himself as much a blockhead as an atheist, and to have as small a gust of the elegancies of expression, as of the sacredness of the matter.”

TRUE DEVOTION PRODUCTIVE OF THE TRUEST PLEASURES.

TRUE devotion is not a melancholy sentiment, that depresses the spirits and excludes the ideas of pleasure which youth are so fond of: On the contrary, there is nothing so friendly to joy, so productive of true pleasure, so peculiarly situated to the warmth and innocence of a youthful heart. Do not therefore think it too soon to turn your mind to God; but offer him the first fruits of your understanding and affections: and be assured the more you increase in love to him, and delight in his laws, the more you will increase in happiness, in excellence and honour:—that in proportion as you improve in true piety, you will become dear and amiable to your fellow creatures: contented and peaceable in yourself, and qualified to enjoy the best blessings of this life, as well as to inherit the glorious promises of immortality.

REFLECTION.

I find (says William Penn) all sorts of people agree, whatsoever were their animosities, when humbled by the approaches of death; then they forgive, then they pray for, and love one another: which shews us, that it is not our reason, but our passion, that makes and holds up the feuds that reign among men in their health and fulness. They, therefore, that live nearest to that state in which they should die, must certainly live the best.

ANECDOTE.

DR. HALLEY, the astronomer, being in company with the great Sir Isaac Newton, in the course of conversation, threw out some contemptuous reflections on christianity. At length Sir Isaac said, “Dr. Hally, I always like to hear you talk on philosophy; you have studied those subjects; you understand them well: but you have not studied the subject of divine revelation. I have very closely, and I know, that you know nothing of the matter.”

Poetry.

PICTURE OF LIFE—A SONNET.

SEE, o'er the water's far extended plain,
 Yon vessel comes with all her canvas spread;
 Beats on the waves, and, rising, falls again:
 Still passing on, she slowly moves ahead.

 So man is toss'd upon a sea of cares;
 Now rais'd to honour, wealth, and shortliv'd fame;
 Now sunk in misery's vale with sullen fears;
 Still passing to the land from whence he came.

 Time hasteth on with drowsy wings, while sad;
 Just so yon ship, when adverse gales arise:
 But when the hour of pleasure is sursey'd,
 As darting sunbeams, the seducer flies.

 Ah that I warn'd might be from this sad truth;
 Nor split on Pleasure's rocks, and wreck my youth.

H O P E.

'TIS Hope whose gentle whisper calms my breast,
 Bless'd Hope! who kindly points to happier days;
 Who ne'er forsakes the unfortunate and distrest,
 Nor leaves us then, when health and life decays.

 Not like the niggard world dost thou impart,
 Thy partial gifts, to affluent and great;
 Thou lov'st to soothe alike, the broken heart
 Of him who lives in lowly humble state.

NEW-YORK: Printed and Published by JOHN C. TOTTEN, No 155 Chatham-street, at TWO DOLLARS per year, payable quarterly. Subscriptions are received by the publisher, and by the Rev. JOHN WILSON, No. 249 Pearl-street. Also, by MR. FURMAN BLACK, No. 148 North Front-street, Philadelphia; and by MR. JAMES HERBERT, Brooklyn.